

CONSERVATION QUARTERLY



Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District
Fall 2018

2019 Tree & Shrub Sale is Here! Order Form inside.

CONSERVATION FARM OF THE YEAR



Three generations stand to receive the award (l-r) Craig Dennis, his son Cyle, and father Carl.

Dennis Family Farm is awarded the 2018 “Conservation Farm of the Year”. Craig Dennis and his father Carl own and operate a 100 cow dairy & cash crop farm on 400 acres of owned and rented land situated in the Limestone Creek watershed that runs into Oneida Lake. To protect water quality, Craig and his Dad have installed many Best Management Practices through several available conservation programs. The farm has also voluntarily participated in demonstration projects that featured the use of GPS technology to precision plant corn on their farm.

Conservation History includes these Best Management Practices:

- ◆ Soil and manure sampling for nutrient analysis and fertilizer recommendations;
- ◆ Milkhouse waste water treatment using a settling tank, grease trap, and grass filter treatment area;
- ◆ Concrete barnyard with manure collection and screen to collect polluted runoff and direct the runoff to a grass filter treatment area;
- ◆ Clean water exclusion using driplines that safely collect clean stormwater and route it underground to water courses;
- ◆ 33 acres rotational grazing system in 2012 with an alternative water supply so that cows do not drink from and defecate in the tributary to Limestone Creek;
- ◆ 4,400 LF of exclusion fence to create a 25 ft buffer from the top of bank that keeps cows out of a tributary to Limestone Creek;

To accomplish these goals the farm participates in the following conservation programs: Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District (OCSWCD) and the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets “Agricultural Environmental Management” program. Local funds through the Onondaga County Agricultural Council and NYS funds through the Environmental Protection Fund, along with substantial farmer cash and in-kind contributions have made these conservation projects possible; USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program; Commodity and crop protection programs through the USDA Farm Service Agency.

The farm is well known for good neighbor relations in their com-



Strip cropping on the contour of the land.

Continued next page

“Promoting excellence in the wise use of our urban/suburban natural resources.”

munity in so many ways. Most recently Craig Dennis parked cars for his neighbor Jim & Sue Smith as they opened their Tre-G Organic Dairy and Fruit/Vegetable farm to the public during Onondaga County Agricultural Council's "ON-Farm Fest" September 22nd.

The Dennis's and employees are involved in the community in the following way:

- ◆ Carl Dennis was on the FSA Board of Directors in Onondaga County for two terms (a total of 10 years).
- ◆ Craig Dennis has been a member of the Delphi Falls Volunteer Fire Department for 30 years.
- ◆ Craig has been on the Board of Directors of the Onondaga County SWCD since 2008 and has served as Vice Chairman of the BOD since 2010 and Chairman since 2018. He is Ex Officio member of the Onondaga County Farmland Protection BOD as Chairman of the District BOD. He also attends the County Budget Defense with the District Executive Director in September as part of his Chairman's duties.
- ◆ Craig has been known to make many overnight trips to Albany and other destinations to represent the District at important conservation meetings to discuss funding and legislation that will continue to strengthen agriculture and help to support his fellow farmers.
- ◆ The Morrisville Central School (2nd and 3rd grade class / ~50 students) participates in a farm tour each spring. The students prepare questions for Mr. Dennis to answer regarding: wind energy, dairy farm operation, different types of crops to plant <grains, corn, hay>. Craig's sons Cody and Cyle also participate in this event, which has been held for the last 4 years.
- ◆ Residents from a local elder care facility have come out to the farm for a picnic lunch and tour for the last four years.
- ◆ Brownie troops from Cazenovia have also participated in farm tours for two years in a row.
- ◆ The farm has held many tours for the District Board of Directors and other officials from Onondaga County over the years. Most recently they hosted the Board meeting and luncheon in their shop on July 25th.
- ◆ During the fall, the farm is often pictured in the Syracuse Post-Standard because of the aesthetic beauty of the farmstead as a fall harvest moon sits over the farm.

To summarize the ethical character of this farm, when they were renovating some barn roofs this summer, they could have easily saved money and a lot of time by disposing of the refuse on land that they owned "in the back 40", but they did not. They chose to live and work by the rules "that we expect of everybody each and every day." They give freely of their time to help their environment, community, and neighbors, and this is why the Dennis Family Farm is so deserving of the 2018 Conservation Farm of the Year award!



Buffer between crop land and Route 20 and the road ditch.



Dairy herd is rotationally grazed.



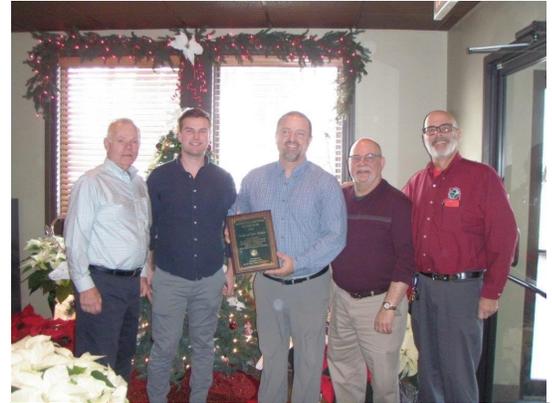
Here's Craig helping to park cars at a neighbor's farm event in September for the County's On-Farm Fest.

MORE 2018 AWARD HIGHLIGHTS

MUNICIPAL PARTNER

By Doug Fisher, Programs Manager

It is with great pleasure that the Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District names the Town of Van Buren as the 2018 Municipal Partner of the year. When considering candidates for this award, the District looks for a municipality that vigorously pursues the maintenance of their stormwater infrastructure using preventative methods as well as innovative projects that further this goal. Additionally, the District grants the award to a different partner each year in the hope that it becomes a goal for each municipality to make our local roads safer for the traveling public and continue to improve our stormwater management efforts.



(l-r): Ken Bush Jr., County Legislator 13th District and OCSWCD Board member; Alex Fisher, OCSWCD Conservation District Technician; Doug Foster, Highway Superintendent; Claude E. Sykes, Town Supervisor; and Doug Fisher, OCSWCD Programs Manager.

APWA AWARD



Joe Wisinski, President of the Central New York APWA presents the award to Mark Burger.

Mark Burger was presented an award for Professional Manager of the Year in Water Resources by the Central New York Branch of American Public Works Association at their Annual Awards banquet on November 15th in Canastota. The Central New York Branch covers the Central New York and Northern New York areas, primarily the counties of Cayuga, Cortland, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, and St. Lawrence.

Congratulations Mark!

ONONDAGA COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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 Kim Clark, *District Conservation Technician*
 Eric Jensen, *Resource Conservation Specialist*

**IN CASE OF AN AG SPILL
 AFTER HOURS
 EMERGENCY, PLEASE CALL MARK BURGER
 315-415-5057**

FALL HAPPENINGS

New York State announced \$1 million for the 5th round of the **New Farmers Grant Fund**. For details, program application and guidelines please visit: www.esd.ny.gov/new-farmers-grant-fund-program. Applications must be postmarked by January 25, 2019.

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Ron May, Conservation District Technician for the Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District participates at FarmFest on September 22nd at the Emmi Farm in Baldwinsville, and showcases the new AEM roll-up exhibit sign.

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Students Learn Farms Voluntarily Protect Water Quality with Agricultural Environmental Management

By Amber M. Paice, Conservation District Technician

On Tuesday, October 30th, I visited Tully Elementary 5th graders to discuss saving water, water quality and Agricultural Environmental Management. Since no two are alike, a farm's environmental impact varies based on type, size, and the location to the nearest water body, among other factors. Students learned that farms responsibly consume water so that in return, they are best able to provide food and other necessities for our use and survival. New York farmers can voluntarily participate in the Agricultural Environmental Management program offering cost-share opportunities to implement Best Management Practices that actively protect water and natural resources for our future. Recommendations are provided by experts through their local Soil and Water Conservation District.

The Tully School District covers several watersheds including Oneida Lake, Onondaga Lake, Otisco Lake which is the secondary drinking source for the City of Syracuse, and Upper Tioughnioga River providing water to the City of Cortland and eventually flows to the Chesapeake Bay providing water for Washington, D.C.



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On November 19th Cornell Cooperative Extension - Onondaga County organized a pilot volunteer shoreline Riparian Buffer planting project along the shores of Skaneateles Lake as a way to protect water quality. Plants were paid for through the Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District.

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Emerald Ash Borer Summer Update

By: Teresa Link

The Emerald Ash Borer (*Agrilus planipennis*) injection season has come to a close. In total we injected 408 trees throughout the County. Injection areas included Oneida Shores Park, Jamesville Beach Park, Pratt's Falls Park, Highland Forest, Carpenter's Brook Fish Hatchery, Beaver Lake Nature Center, Onondaga Community College, Marcellus Park, Ryder Park, and town road right-of-ways in the Town of DeWitt. The insecticide we use for injections, TREE-age®, is working well throughout the County.



Picture of untreated ash trees (left) next to injected ash tree (right) in the Town of DeWitt.

IMPLEMENTATION UPDATES

By Ron May, Conservation District Technician

Part of Tucker’s Barnyard Improvement Project was the replacement of this failed outlet box that had been plugged for years. The new outlet box was re-poured outside the barnyard (common practice today) instead of having a drop inlet in the floor of the barnyard, which was what the failed outlet box was.

What was unique about this outlet box was that the Tuckers needed to continue to back their manure spreader along the barnyard for loading with their skid-steer. The new outlet box was designed flush to the surrounding ground and equipped with a sheet metal cover so the spreader, when necessary, could be rolled over the outlet box with ease. The new outlet box functions exactly the same as a normal one and outlets into a VTA for proper treatment of the barnyard’s effluent. The metal cover is equipped with loops so it can be lifted off with a chain and skid-steer easily for cleaning when needed.



CNY Masonry completed the barnyard improvement project for the Tuckers . The project had NYS EPF 20 and farmer funding and is in the Otisco Lake Watershed.



Fleckenstein Beef Farm: Empire Fence Co. has completed approximately 15,000 LF of fence installation for the Fleckenstein’s prescribed grazing project! The project has farmer and NYS EPF 21 grant funding and is in the Onondaga Lake watershed.



Watson Beef Farm: All Seasons Excavation, LLC completed the Watson’s concrete barnyard and composting facility projects! These two pads are combined with a vegetated treatment area to filter and treat waste products

that accumulate on them. These projects had farmer and NYS EPF 23 grant funding and are in the Onondaga Lake watershed.

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By Eric Renfer, Resource Conservation Specialist

Aging fuel tanks on Emmi Farms in Lysander were replaced this summer with funding provided by the NYS Environmental Protection Fund. The new fuel tanks have double-wall protection and safety bollards to prevent vehicle damage. This site is one-quarter mile from the Seneca River and less than one-half mile away from the Doan wellfield, which supplies water to the village of Baldwinsville.



“It is our vision to live in a society in which future generations will have natural resources necessary to sustain and enrich their quality of life.”

ONONDAGA EARTH CORPS ENCORE

By Eva Brown, Resource Conservation Specialist

For the second time, I attended OEC's Encore event, which is their take on an annual meeting/fundraising dinner. Once again, I was truly inspired and moved by the stories and experiences that were shared by OEC employees, a majority of which are youth and minorities from the inner city. I firmly believe that this is an organization that is making real change in the Syracuse community and is having real and lasting positive impacts on peoples' lives.



Each year, OEC showcases a few of their employees that have stood out in the program. These individuals are asked to share their story and it is presented as a written summary with an accompanying portrait. There is a common theme that runs through these stories. Growing up in a family that is not always able to make ends meet, growing up in a family or community that is not always positive or supportive, growing up in a community where they personally knew 9 out of 12 people who were victims of gun violence, these individuals come to OEC unsure of themselves and what they are capable of achieving. OEC challenges them, provides them with a positive and welcoming community which can feel like a second family, and gives them the tools and environment to develop real world job skills and abilities. Once they complete a season or multiple seasons with OEC, they are noticeably different. They have found a place where they fit into the world, they are overflowing with self-confidence, and they are bringing back this positivity into their own communities and encouraging the same in their peers. OEC has worked with our Dis-

trict on various projects including tree planting in parks and shoreline restoration.

I have discovered how much I like OEC. The work is calming. I come from a lot of negativity and sometimes I feel stressed. Who would think weeding could make you feel relaxed. It makes me happy too. In 2015 a lot of people died in my neighborhood. I knew 9 out of 12. I wanted to leave negativity behind and find positivity. Now look at me! I am in my own home! If I can do it, anyone can. I try to help others be positive and I'm trying to uplift my peers."

Rubin Harrison

When I first started working at OEC I overheard some volunteers from outside the city refer to us as minorities. I did not want to be called a minority. It was painful to hear. There is something big about what we are doing. We are restoring our communities and we are restoring ourselves too. This is an important part of OEC. Now that they have worked with us and have gotten to know us, they see the good people we are. We have come together!"

So-Unique Harrison

Onondaga Earth Corps has really changed me, I have gained professionalism and have learned how to speak to people without being nervous. When OEC invites people in the community to be part of planting trees they get to see Syracuse in a positive way. For me, OEC is not just a job. It's a family. It has changed me. I am a better person because of it."

Marquise Brown-Thornton

I am blessed for the opportunity OEC has given me. I love it! OEC made it possible for me to go to a conference in Rochester to speak about the work we do. In November, I will be going to the "Partners in Community Forestry" conference put on by The Arbor Day Foundation and held in Orange County, California. It is the largest international gathering of urban forestry practitioners, advocates, researchers, and government leaders."

Tyrell Ivey Sr.

The Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.

SKANEATELES LAKE WATERSHED AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM

2018 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARD AWARD

By Eric Jensen, Resource Conservation Specialist



At this year's Annual Meeting, the 2018 'Environmental Steward of the Year' award was presented to Jeff & Steve Ireland, owners of Ireland Farms in Spafford, NY. Ben Walsh, the Mayor of the City of Syracuse, had the pleasure of announcing the award. The award recognizes the farm's high level of conservation excellence in protecting the water quality of Skaneateles Lake.

Ireland Farms is a 4th generation family farm. The previous generation operated a 35-cow dairy along with the associated cropland. Since then, the farm has transitioned to dairy heifers and beef cows with cash crops, to today focusing on 1,050 acres of grain and cash crops.

The farm has participated in various Federal, State, and County conservation programs - USDA Soil Conservation Service/Farm Service Agency, NYS Agricultural Environmental Management, Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District, and the SLWAP.

They have installed numerous conservation practices over the years. Since 2016, the farm has worked with Larry Goehring of Cornell University to implement 2 woodchip bioreactors on tile outlets to reduce nutrients entering tributaries flowing to Otisco Lake. They recently hosted a tour stop for the National Association of State Conservation Agencies to exhibit this tile drain nutrient reduction technology. The farm also participated in the 2007-2008 SLWAP Conservation Innovation Grant researching the use of cover crops as a weed control method with a Roller-crimper technology. Fifty conservation professionals from 28 states participated in the tour.

The Ireland family has been involved in County and Town government, serving in various capacities over the years. Jeff has served on the Spafford Town board for 12 years.

We are proud to award Jeff & Steve Ireland the 2018 SLWAP Conservation Steward of the Year.



(L-R) Jeff Ireland, Ireland Farms; Mark Burger, Program Manager; Heather Birdsall, Birdsall Beef and recipient of the 2015 award; and Mayor Ben Walsh, City of Syracuse. Photo courtesy of Roland Ivers, Volunteer

THE USEFUL LIVING SNOW FENCE

Blowing and drifting snow from winter storms creates snow drifts that can close roads, block driveways, and endanger unprotected livestock. One of the best ways to alleviate these problems is to plant a living snow fence - rows of trees and shrubs planted to keep snow off roads. Living snow fences were first planted in the early 1900s to protect railroad lines and major highways with many of them still providing protection today.

Once a living snow fence is established it will do the job for at least 75 years. A dense snow fence also provides a home for many wild animals and birds. A living snow fence can capture up to 12 times more snow per foot of height than a slatted or picket fence, AND is cheaper to install than a slatted snow fence, with virtually no to low maintenance.

If you are interested in trying this innovative conservation practice, please call us for more information and assistance at (315) 457-0325.

The Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program is a cooperative effort between the Soil & Water Conservation Districts and Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations of Onondaga, Cortland and Cayuga Counties, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the City of Syracuse, and Skaneateles Lake watershed farmers. Principal funding provided by the City of Syracuse.



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